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Pelham NEWS

Swinging forward

BERND FRANKE/POSTMEDIA NETWORK

Chris Poulouski, left, and J.J. Alexander each hit 1,000 golf balls to raise money for Wellspring Niagara at Lookout Point Country Club last Sunday in Fonthill. **See more on page 6.**

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LOCALNEWS

Cops looking to armour up

BILL SAWCHUK
Postmedia Network

Niagara Regional Police are hoping to add a "tactical rescue vehicle" to its arsenal, following a trend across the country.

They have included a proposal for a $300,000 expenditure in the draft 2017 capital budget for the vehicle, which is blast-proof, has gun ports and weighs more than 6,750 kilograms.

That request will come up at the Niagara police services board committee meeting Thursday.

"It's an operational tool we will use, but it's also like an insurance policy," police Chief Jeff McGuire says. "You hope you never need it, but when that radio call comes — whether it is a farmhouse in a rural area, or a shopping centre or a school — you need to have it on the road right away.

"That's not the time to be thinking, 'Boy, we really need this.'"

McGuire recognizes there is some sticker shock, but the vehicle has a life span of 15 to 20 years, which would "spread out" the cost.

In Ontario, Hamilton, Toronto, London, Peel, Durham and Ottawa police have all travelled down this road with their boards. They have armoured vehicles in their fleets. So do Sault Ste. Marie and the OPP.

"Unfortunately, some of what people see in their minds is what they see on CNN with major riots south of the border," McGuire says. "They see the vehicle is rolling down the middle of the street dispensing tear gas and firing a water cannon.

"People need to understand the rescue part is the key piece. It's a vehicle we can use when we get called to situations where we simply can't approach safely. It protects the public and our officers."

Police board chair Bob Gale has some serious questions about the cost, but wants to hear the chief's presentation before he officially reacts.

"I don't think it is a good idea at all, but I will let the chief explain his case," Gale says. "We need him to show us where he has needed it in the past. Then we will make a decision on it as a board.

"We don't have $300,000. I get that we might need it, but we can't just have things just sitting in our yard, especially if we can share them."

Gale says fellow board member David Barrick took the lead when it came to increasingly sharing resources with police services in Hamilton and Buffalo.

"We need to do deals with them if we can," Gale says. "For instance, Waterloo uses our dive team. If they have to wait a couple of hours for our dive team to get up there, we can wait for an armoured car."

McGuire is skeptical a sharing agreement would work in the case of an armoured vehicle.

"It's not really feasible," he says. "If I were the chief or board chair in Hamilton, I would feel I had made a significant investment in the safety of my community.

See ARMOUR on page 9

THE CANADIAN PRESS

The Montreal Police department's new armoured vehicle is shown at a press launch in Montreal in 2013.

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LOCALNEWS

Human West Nile cases arrive in Niagara

LAURA BARTON
Postmedia Network

The year's first cases of humans infected with West Nile virus in Niagara have been confirmed by the public health department.

Niagara Public Health said in a news release there are two laboratory-confirmed cases.

Where the infected people reside has not been disclosed.

Dr. Andrea Feller, associate medical officer of health, said this is usually the time of year these cases arise.

She said it's because of the incubation period between birds and mosquitoes getting the illness and it being transferred to humans.

"The mosquitoes will bite an infected bird, then the mosquitoes get it from the bird and then it takes the time after that until they start transmitting it to humans," she said.

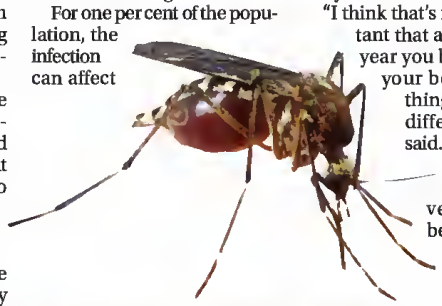
Another reason it takes a while for confirmed cases to come about is because people don't tend to get sick right away or just dismiss symptoms as the flu.

"The vast majority of people will never even know that they had an infection," Feller said. "So we typically don't find out about human cases until somebody's actually been sick."

She said many people in Niagara could have been infected with the illness and not even known it because they don't exhibit symptoms.

In most cases, she said, symptoms dissipate after a while. People who already have illnesses they are dealing with might feel the effects for longer.

For one per cent of the population, the infection can affect the brain, spinal cord and neurological system.



"That's why we take this disease so seriously."

Once someone has had the illness however, there is a lifelong immunity, she said.

Feller said there are no visible physical symptoms, like one might experience with Lyme disease.

"There are some people when they get symptoms — what they call West Nile Fever — they can get a rash."

This time of the year also coincides with the time to be wary of tick bites as well.

"I think that's really important that at this time of year you be looking at your body for anything unusual or different," Feller said.

She said prevention is the best method to avoid West Nile virus, so wearing long clothing, socks and shoes is highly recommended during the morning and evening hours when mosquitoes are most active. Insect repellant is another good tactic.

Getting rid of standing water is also a good idea. She said even children's toys that might be sitting around the yard could collect water, so it's good to be mindful of those things, too.

Feller recommended anyone feeling symptoms related to West Nile virus visit their physician.

lbarton@postmedia.com

WEST NILE VIRUS SYMPTOMS

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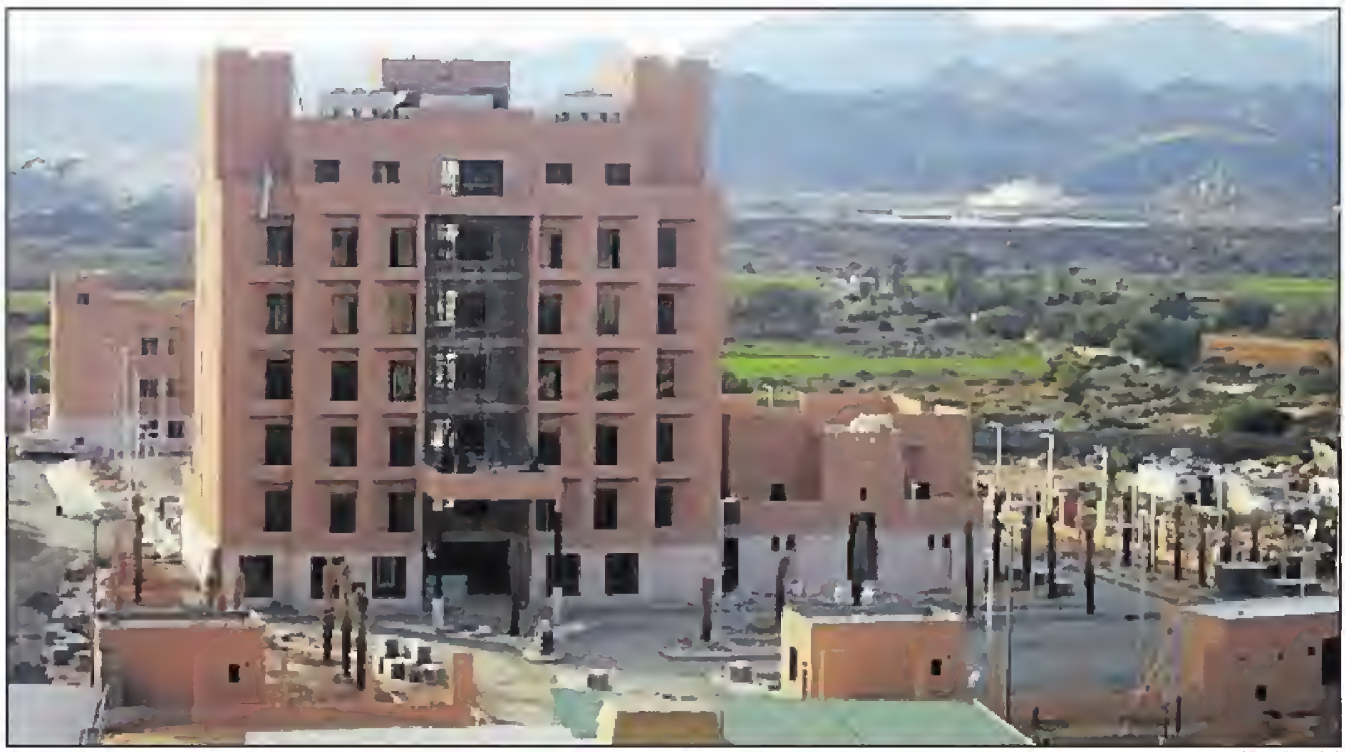
Niagara College still doesn't get it

GRANT LAFLECHE



SUPPLIED PHOTO

Niagara College's campus in Taif, Saudi Arabia.

You ever have that one obnoxious friend who, no matter what you do or say, just cannot understand why their behaviour is so irritating?

Niagara College is like that friend for our region. It's hard to imagine Niagara without the college, but, like a friend who routinely acts out in embarrassing ways, it can't or won't change.

Readers of this column will not be surprised that I am again referring to the college's ever-deepening relationship with the oil theocracy of Saudi Arabia, a nation that sets annual records for state-sponsored beheadings.

When I last wrote about Niagara College it was to inform you that it was running not one, but two men-only tourism/hospitality programs in Saudi Arabia. The college didn't exactly hide this fact, it just didn't volunteer the information to the community. You have to go looking for it.

As it turns out, Niagara College is actually operating a third such program, this time at the female-only Al Ahsaa college.

When I inquired about this campus, college spokeswoman Susan McConnell e-mailed me a statement which reads in part: "Single gender colleges are prevalent in many countries around the world (including Ontario)."

While true in the strictest sense, the implication of that statement — that all-girls or all-boys schools in Ontario are the same as those in Saudi Arabia — was so shocking it nearly caused an electrical fire in my brain.

It also displayed the ethical gymnastics the college is willing to do to justify its actions.

Niagara College just doesn't get it.

No matter what anyone says, no matter the degree of oppression in Saudi Arabia, Niagara College will participate in that nation's system of gender apartheid so long as it can make a buck.

It is a disgraceful betrayal of Canadian democratic values.

We need to back up for a moment, however, because there is a lot to unpack in terms of the reality of Saudi Arabia versus Niagara College's justifications and the fact that the college is now operating a women-only school.

We'll start with the latter.

Niagara College came under fire earlier this year for its Saudi men-only programs. Even Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne was unhappy about it, although she has studiously avoided the subject for months.

Saudi Arabia is a nation where women live in a theocratic straitjacket. Women cannot work, go to school or even leave the house without the expressed permission of a male guardian.

(As I noted in my last column, the Twitter campaign #stopenslavingsaudiwomen allows you to hear the accounts of the lives of Saudi women for yourself.)

Now, let it not be said I won't give credit where it is due. In her e-mail statement, McConnell says part of the college's mission is "aimed at improving the employability of young people anywhere in the world." This is important work. Providing job skills to Saudi women may, in fact, improve their lives.

But there are some caveats so serious that the college shouldn't be applauded for operating a women-only campus.

First — and contra to McConnell's implied equivalence of single-gender schools in Ontario and Saudi Arabia — the Al Ahsaa college exists because women are forbidden by law to attend classes with men.

This is not just the case in schools. Gender segregation is strictly enforced everywhere. Women cannot be in public with men who are not family. Punishment for breaching these laws is severe, including imprisonment and torture.

Under Saudi law, a woman cannot attend post-secondary classes — including the ones operated by Niagara College — without the consent of her male guardian. Far from promoting the cause of gender equality by educating women in hospitality, Niagara College is further entrenching itself in a system of state-enforced misogyny.

To McConnell's point about single-gender schools in Ontario: yes, they exist. But they are private institutions that parents and students elect to attend. There are no laws in Canada that enforce gender segregation. A Canadian woman does not need the permission of any man to go to school.

So to suggest the situation in Ontario is akin to that of Saudi Arabia on any level is to either be deliberately evasive or shockingly ignorant. I will let the college's administration determine which of those things it wants to be.

(By the way, when I asked McConnell if she really meant to equate Ontario to Saudi Arabia, given the context of Saudi law, she e-mailed the following: "As for the info you requested, NC, like many other Western governments and organizations, has chosen engagement rather than isolation and we remain committed to the important work we do there.")

It's time Niagara College, its students, faculty and the Niagara community — from business people to politicians — cast off the childisb naivety of "engagement."

There is no give-and-take here. Western colleges in Saudi Arabia operate at the pleasure of the Saudi authorities. The Saudi government, which suppresses freedom of expression with an iron fist, would never permit a college to teach classes on secular, democratic political theory or gender equality. Niagara College classes must be taught in conformity to Saudi Sharia laws.

Instead of changing Saudi Arabia, institutions such as Niagara College merely prove that Canadian democratic values are for sale when the price is right.

Operating women-only classes does not change the ethical and moral implications of participating in a political and social system that actively and openly oppresses women.

We, as a community of free people in a free nation, need to stop pretending this is OK and insist Niagara College invest its resources elsewhere.

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LOCALNEWS

YMCA children getting provincial boost

MARYANNE FIRTH
Postmedia Network

Two new programs to encourage children to get active are being rolled out at Niagara's YMCAs.

Kid Fit: Yoga and Kid Fit: Cardio will be added to the programming roster in 2017 thanks to $79,607 in provincial funding announced last Monday in St. Catharines.

Delivered through the Ontario Sport and Recreation Communities Fund, the money is intended to help Niagara children get active and create healthy habits they will carry through to adulthood, YMCA of Niagara CEO Janet St. Amand said.

The funding will cover the cost of developing the program curriculums, training 87 staff members in fundamental movement skills and physical literacy assessments, and running the programs for one year.

Geared toward ages three to 12, the programs will help 800 children across Niagara develop their physical literacy skills.

Teaching children to run, catch, hop, throw, balance and be agile is critical in order to transition them from healthy active children to healthy active adults, St. Amand said.

Those skills, she added, are "vital" in a day when children are "less active than even before and childhood obesity rates continue to rise."

The eight-week programs will first be piloted in early 2017 at St. Catharines, Grimsby and Niagara Falls YMCAs before being expanded to all six Niagara locations. A program coordinator has been bired to develop the curriculum, which will be done in conjunction with Brock University and Canadian Sport for Life.

St. Catharines MPP Jim Bradley, who made last Monday's announcement, said there's growing competition for the attention of children, particularly with today's technology.

Too much screen time can be unhealthy, he said, while lauding community efforts to try and encourage children to engage in healthy activities.

Bradley called the two new programs yet another opportunity to "see kids active with something other than their fingers and thumbs."

The provincial government, through the Ontario Sport and Recreation Communities Fund, is supporting 129 organizations in 2016 with a total $7.2 million.

MARYANNE FIRTH/POSTMEDIA NETWORK

The province announced $79,607 in funding to create two new children's programs at Niagara's YMCAs in St. Catharines, Ont. YMCA day camp participants Alex Zou, Hailey Beattie, Jasmin Texin and Carlina Chiocchio warmed up with some exercises before heading to a nearby park.

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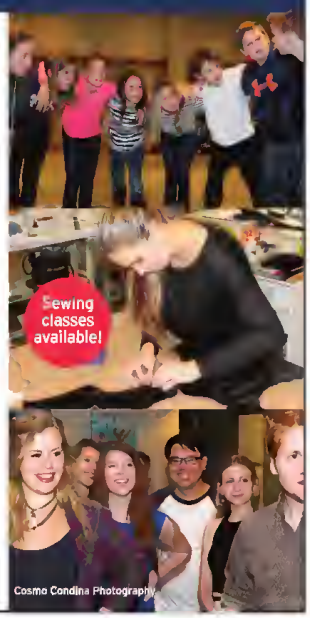

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LOCAL NEWS

Golf pros drive for cancer support centre

BERND FRANKE
Postmedia Network

"Drive for show, but putt for dough" wasn't something Wellspring Niagara was able to take to the bank last Sunday.

Only balls that two golf pros launched with pitching wedges on the driving range at Lookout Point Country Club in Fonthill benefitted the organization that helps cancer patients and their families.

J.J. Alexander, the head pro at Lookout Point, and Chris Poulouski, teaching pro at the Ryall-Kaneff Golf Academy at Royal Niagara in Niagara-on-the-Lake, took part in a 1,000-ball challenge.

Each ball was sponsored with a $5 donation to Wellspring, bringing in a total of $1,000. A dinner and elimination draw held at Lookout Point later in the day was expected to raise an additional $2,500 to $5,000.

It's the fourth year that Alexander has taken part in the fundraiser and the second in which Poulouski has hit balls alongside him.

"It's fun to have someone to share this with," said Alexander, who began hitting balls at 7:30 a.m. and was averaging 125 balls an hour.

See GOLF on page 13

BERND FRANKE/POSTMEDIA NETWORK

Chris Poulouski, left, and J.J. Alexander take a break at a fundraising event on behalf of Wellspring Niagara at Lookout Point Country Club last Sunday in Fonthill.

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Register at **pelham.ca/culture-days** by Friday, September 16, 2016

For more information, contact Jodi Hendriks at jhendriks@pelham.ca, 905-892-2607 ext. 341

Pelham NIAGARA

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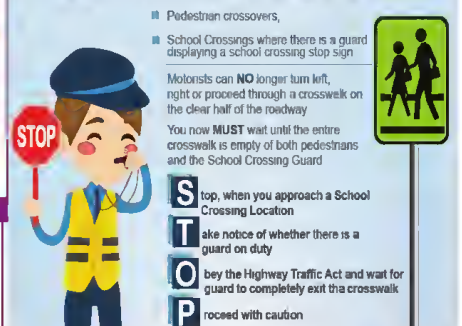

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LOCALNEWS

Police put in proposal for tactical rescue vehicle or armoured car

ARMOUR from page 2

"I wouldn't want my armoured vehicle in Fort Erie or Port Colborne on the day something happened in my jurisdiction. In an absolute emergency, it is a possibility — but not on a regular basis."

Kevin Walby, a criminologist from at University of Manitoba, has been watching the use of armoured vehicles by police spread across the country.

He says high-risk and high-threat situations exist, and the use of the vehicles in those situations is obviously justified, but there is more to the story.

Walby is alarmed — and says the public should be alarmed — when police use armoured vehicles for what he considers regular policing duties, even if it is a high-risk activity such as serving a search warrant in a drug investigation.

"The vehicle is essentially a tank — and there isn't a lot of research on whether the escalation of force stimulates the chaos the police say they are trying to prevent," he says.

"In the U.S. they have all these 'no knock' raids that are very much like military operations. There is a lot of gun fire exchanged — and a lot of people are killed. The police come in and someone is holding a kettle in a dark room. Those people get shot.

"That's not what we want to see happen in Canada."

The fear, prevalent among civil libertarians in the U.S., is when you dress and arm your officers in military equipment, they lose sight of their role to serve and protect the community — and act with increasing aggression.

McGuire offers no apologies for the way his emergency task unit is dressed and equipped.

"Our emergency response team, our tactical units, are militarized," he says. "They are equipped with military equipment. They wear military uniforms. They are trained differently. They are the ones we call in when it is an extreme and dangerous situation.

"Do we intend to have them running around in downtown St. Catharines and Niagara Falls in an armoured vehicle? The simple answer is no."

Walby says he has beard anecdotally from officers that police in Canada are indeed using the vehicles for routine police work.

"The claim is that serving these warrants has become far more dangerous," he says. "The police are saying there are more guns out there. That may, or may not, be the case.

"I would like to see more reporting on things like the actual number of guns found in these raids. Raids have always been a dangerous activity for the police. I'm not saying it isn't, but I would like to see claims substantiated with statistics.

"When police buy armoured vehicles, when they buy helicopters, when they spend hundreds of thousands of dollars on these types of paramilitary toys, they don't have to justify it with a report and statistics as other government agencies do."

As if to illustrate Walby's point, Hamilton Police won't release information or statistics about how often and why their armoured vehicle is used.

bsawchuk@postmedia.com

ANOTHER USE?

Kevin Walby, a criminologist from at University of Manitoba, has been watching the acquisition and increased use of armoured vehicles by police in Canada.

He has noticed another mission for which the tactical rescue vehicles are used — which he finds ironic.

"The No. 2 usage — interestingly enough — is to trot them out for public relations events and let kids climb on them and let families poke their noses inside. It is essentially a tank. It's a strange kind of way to broker trust and legitimacy with the public."

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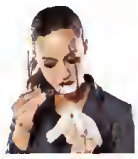

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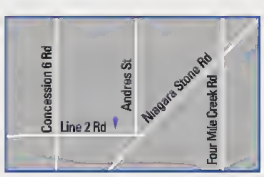

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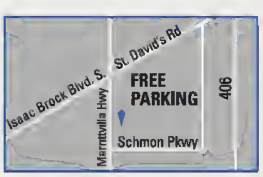

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LOCALNEWS

1,000-ball challenge aids Wellspring Niagara

GOLF from page 6

Each of the pros hit 1,000 balls, all of them aimed at a red flag designating the hole 125 yards a hole. An ace was worth $500 to the person who sponsored the ball, said Alexander, who edged Poulouski 3-1 in holes-in-one last year and was up by one last Sunday.

Unlike last year, when only bragging rights were on the line, the two friends had a side bet going this time around. Whoever drains the fewest aces in the 1,000-ball challenge has to buy the winner a case of beer.

"The most-expensive one," Alexander said with a laugh when asked about his favourite brand.

"Because I'm a nice guy, and also because I'm behind, the least expensive," Poulouski said.

The fundraiser started four years ago at Lookout Point to help Carole Smith, a club member who was battling a rare form of cancer and has since died.

Both of the pros have been touched by cancer. Alexander was diagnosed with thyroid cancer in 2011 and is now in remission, while Poulouski's father-in-law Rick Kellond, 66, of Dunnville died of cancer in June.

> **"Because I'm a nice guy, and also because I'm behind, the least expensive."**
>
> Chris Poulouski

"I'm dedicated today's event to him," Poulouski said.

Since its inception the 1,000-ball challenge has raised $15,000 for Wellspring Niagara. The money will be used to help the agency replace its current cramped facility on Schmon Parkway in Thorold with a much-larger centre on Regional Road 20 in Fonthill.

Groundbreaking is set for some time in 2017.

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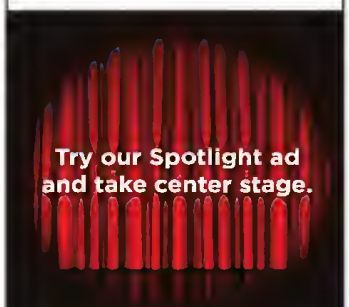

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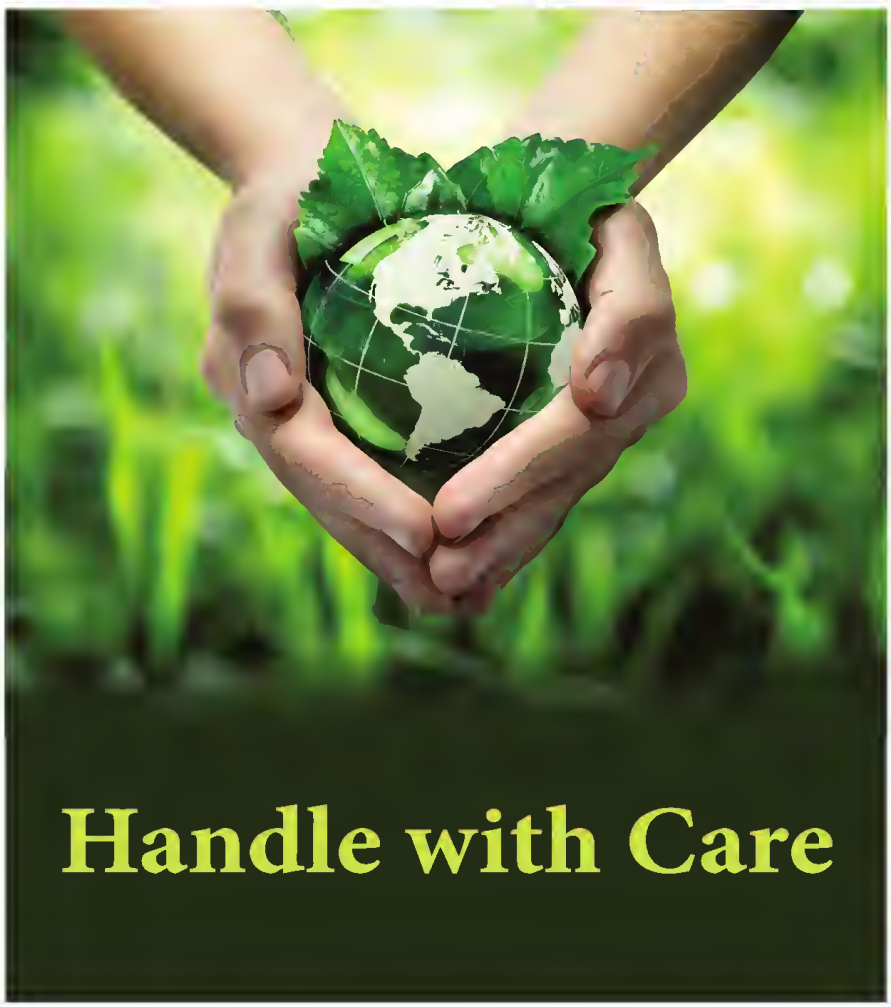

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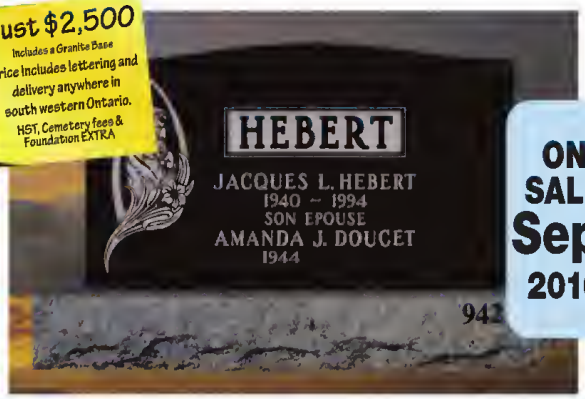

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